

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
(HORTICULTURAL BRANCH).

Honey Production in British Columbia, Year 1918.

By F. DUNDAS TODD, FOUL-BROOD INSPECTOR.

ON the first day of October, 1918, there were listed on the records of the Department of Agriculture the names of 1,611 bee-keepers in the Province. From all of them there was requested a honey-crop report for the season, and 510 reported. Briefly stated, we get the following results:—

Year.	Colonies in April.	Crop.	Average per Hive.
1918	2,807	Lb. 139,671	Lb. 48

Assuming that those reporting are fairly representative bee-keepers, a little calculation will show that the total honey-crop of the Province is indicated to be about 222 tons. If we calculate the crop of individual districts on the basis of the figures given, making due allowance for the status of the bee-keepers reporting—in some districts the most successful bee-keepers did not report, while in others they made returns so unanimously that they overweighted the totals—we find the crop indicated to be about 232 tons, so that it is apparently a fair assumption that the total crop of the year was about 227 tons, being an increase over 1917 of 67 tons, or 42 per cent., and easily the biggest crop in the history of the Province.

The honey was of very fine quality and sold readily at 28 cents a pound wholesale. The retail price was usually 40 cents a pound, the buyer providing the container. For many years, up to the beginning of the war, the wholesale price of British Columbia honey was 17 cents a pound, so that the price in 1918 showed an increase of 60 per cent. above the old ruling price. This is probably high-water mark, and we may expect a slight drop in the year to come.

The Bee Inspectors have usually estimated the annual consumption of honey in British Columbia to be about 200 tons, so that apparently the crop of 1918 indicates overproduction. Such is not the case, as several wholesale houses before the end of the year had imported very large quantities from Australia, finding a ready market on the Prairies for all they could buy. The writer is of opinion that the bee-keepers of British Columbia will have no cause to worry about overproduction until the total crop reaches the 1,000-ton mark—say, eight or ten years hence.

REPORT OF HONEY-CROP BY DISTRICTS FOR 1918.

District.	Bee-keepers on List.	Bee-keepers reporting.	Hives reported.	Crop reported.	Average per Hive.
				Lb.	Lb.
Burnaby	124	45	246	10,876	44
Chilliwack	78	21	105	6,808	65
Coquitlam	14	4	15	356	24
Delta	45	12	84	4,979	59
Dewdney	19	5	27	2,200	74
Howe Sound	30	6	7	81	11
Pemberton Meadows ...	4	1	7	600	86
Kent	18	2	4	105	26
Langley	76	30	126	8,932	71
Maple Ridge	28	10	74	3,187	43
Matsqui	41	14	72	7,820	108
Mission	47	16	54	3,695	68
North Vancouver	63	14	109	2,108	19
Point Grey	63	22	164	616	4
Richmond	55	16	109	2,740	25
South Vancouver	77	23	130	1,522	11
Sumas	48	15	124	7,006	56
Surrey	96	21	155	6,707	43
Vancouver	97	35	171	2,001	15
Comox	25	10	39	2,508	64
Duncan	32	11	37	819	22
Gulf Islands	35	12	49	1,337	27
Nanaimo	91	30	148	4,009	27
Victoria	98	24	80	1,188	15
Okanagan Lake	145	39	392	32,442	83
Thompson River	78	16	121	10,174	84
Arrow Lakes	28	8	40	2,337	58
Kootenay Lakes	123	48	208	11,840	57
Totals	1,611	510	2,897	139,671	48

In 1916 the total honey production of the Province was probably about 20 tons. The objective of the Bee Inspectors was to see it reach 200 tons, our estimated annual consumption. The crop of 1918 therefore marks a definite milestone in the progress of the honey industry, and the Inspectors feel that both the bee-keepers and themselves can say with satisfaction that there has been "something attempted, something done."

The reports indicate an average of 5.7 colonies to the apiary, as against 4.4 in 1917, being an increase of 29 per cent. We are apparently recovering from the heavy losses of the two previous winters, but until we have added an average of two colonies to each apiary we have not fully recuperated. Three-quarters of our crop increase is due to the gain in numbers of colonies, as our average per hive is slightly under that of 1917.

THE HONEY-FLOW.

From the very start the honey prospects in the Dry Belt were good, but the very opposite was true in the region of the Lower Fraser. The season was cold and dry, so that from the middle of May to the middle of July the bees made no headway; in fact, they were living from hand to mouth. The clover-flow was a failure, so most bee-keepers were facing the outlook of having to invest heavily in sugar for winter stores. The weather broke on July 18th, and two days' heavy rain followed, putting nectar into the fireweed. The moisture came too late to be of any value to the bee-keepers round Vancouver, but east of New Westminster there followed one of the honey-flows we read about but very seldom see. The bees rushed in the nectar and piled the honey into the hives so that some big crops were obtained. One colony stored fully 300 lb. above winter stores, while 100 to 200 lb. were not uncommon. We now have a record of the crop production in British Columbia for six years, with a fair estimate for two more, and the outstanding

feature of them is that in the even-numbered years the crop is good in the Dry Belt, while in the odd-numbered years the Wet Belt has its turn. If the past conditions hold good, the bee-keepers of the Lower Fraser have a good prospect ahead of them for 1919.

WINTER STORES.

The outlook for wintering is good. Stores were of excellent quality and the weather has been mild, so bees should be in good condition when the season opens in March. The one need, then, for quick breeding-up is plenty of stores, as at least 1 lb. of honey a day is needed for the brood at this season of the year, and very little is being brought in. In an average hive it takes about 20 lb. to winter a hive from the middle of September until the middle of March, but the bees will consume just as much from the middle of March to the middle of April; hence it is not stores for winter alone one leaves in the fall, but stores for winter and spring, the latter being the most important.

FOUL-BROOD SITUATION.

American foul-brood is apparently well in hand. During 1918 it was found in three apiaries in the Okanagan region, in one in the Kootenay country, and in seven in the Vancouver District. A very virulent form of European foul-brood has appeared in Surrey, where forty-five apiaries were found affected, and in the region round Vancouver in thirty-three apiaries. These were treated mostly by dequeening, then requeening with Italian stock in twenty-one days. European foul-brood spreads very rapidly, making jumps for which no explanation has so far been found. It is much easier to control than American foul-brood, but unless taken in hand at once will soon wipe out the bees of a district. The day for easy-going bee-keeping in the Lower Fraser region is now past; each bee-keeper from now on must attend regularly to his bees or go out of the industry. He must be a first-class bee-keeper or nothing.

MOVEMENTS OF BEES.

To-day we have in the Province about six times the number of bee-keepers there were in 1911, and that means there was a very free movement of hives during the past eight years, with the natural consequence that foul-brood has had every opportunity to be spread into all regions. To prevent as far as possible the dissemination of disease by this means, the Government passed an Order in Council prohibiting the movement of bees unless they had been inspected and found free from foul-brood within a period of not more than thirty days. Any bee-keeper, therefore, who wishes to move or sell bees must apply for a permit to the Department of Agriculture to the local Inspector, who will examine the hives at the earliest possible moment.

HONEY EXHIBITS AT VANCOUVER.

The third exhibit held by the Bee-keepers' Association of British Columbia at the Vancouver Exhibition again proved worth while. A new feature was the quick sale for members of many tons of honey by the association sales-agent to wholesale houses. The association expects to supervise the honey exhibits at New Westminster and Victoria in 1919 as well as those of Vancouver.

The mild winter indicates a big demand for bee supplies in 1919; a list of dealers can be supplied on application to the Department of Agriculture at Victoria.

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